

The Muslim Sunrise

SPECIAL Edition • June, 2010

"In the latter days, the sun shall rise from the west" • Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be on him)

*Ahmadiyya
Muslim
Community
USA*

A Special Edition For New Members

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in 189 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjabi province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah). The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity. Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: “The religion of the people of the right path” (98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qur’anic teaching: “There is no compulsion in religion” (2:257). It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah..



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

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Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *alaehis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu alaeihi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *radhi-Allaho anhu/a* or 'may Allah be pleased with him/her.' While such salutations sometimes are not set out in the text for readability, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (1872-1957) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the *Muslim Sunrise*, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presenting their solutions from an Islamic perspective.

www.muslimsunrise.com



**AHMADIYYA
MUSLIM COMMUNITY**

United States of America

*Muslims who believe in the Messiah, Hazrat
Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Qadiani^{AS}*

Unity is Strength

Editorial

Review of Religions, July 1993

Unity is strength! The fundamental message of Islam is the Unity of God and the establishment of the unity of mankind bound together by ties of practical brotherhood. This is the clarion call of Islam which abhors strife, hatred, greed, selfishness, pride, intolerance and such like unbrotherly dispositions. The aim of every Muslim should be in accordance with the injunction of the Holy Quran:

Help one another in righteousness and piety.

The Holy Prophet of Islam has likened the true spirit of Islamic brotherhood to that of a building every part of which reinforces other parts and, as an undivided symbol of unity, commanded Muslims when lined up for prayer to stand together shoulder to shoulder like a solid wall leaving no space for even a rod to be passed between them.

Islam is a universal religion revealed by God for the guidance of all mankind and is above personal bias, tribal prejudice and ignorant sectarianism. It teaches that all human beings are equal and nobody is superior to another due to origin, colour, genealogy or race. The only difference in the sight of God between individuals is their degree of righteousness. As God says in the Holy Quran:

Verily the most honorable person among you in the sight of God is he who is the most righteous among you. (49:14)

This ideal of Islamic unity and brotherhood which is sadly lacking in the world today can only be achieved by devoutly acting upon the injunctions of Islam. Muslims should act upon and call people to what is good, and avoid and forbid what is bad. The strong and more fortunate should help the weak and less fortunate. The rich should help the poor. No one should usurp the property and rights of others. Religious tolerance is essential.

The Ahmadiyya Community in Islam has been dedicated to the revival of Islam for over one hundred years since its inception in 1889 by its Holy Founder, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad--the Promised Messiah and Mahdi. Its growth has spread all over the world and the Community continues to spread its heavenly influence in rejuvenating the pristine purity of Islam in the hearts of people of all nations and creating among them a bond of divine unity.



Special Issue Dedicated to New Members , June , 2010

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Welcome to the American Ahmadiyya Muslim Community



We welcome you to the American Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, and challenge you to embody our motto: **Love for All, Hatred For None.**

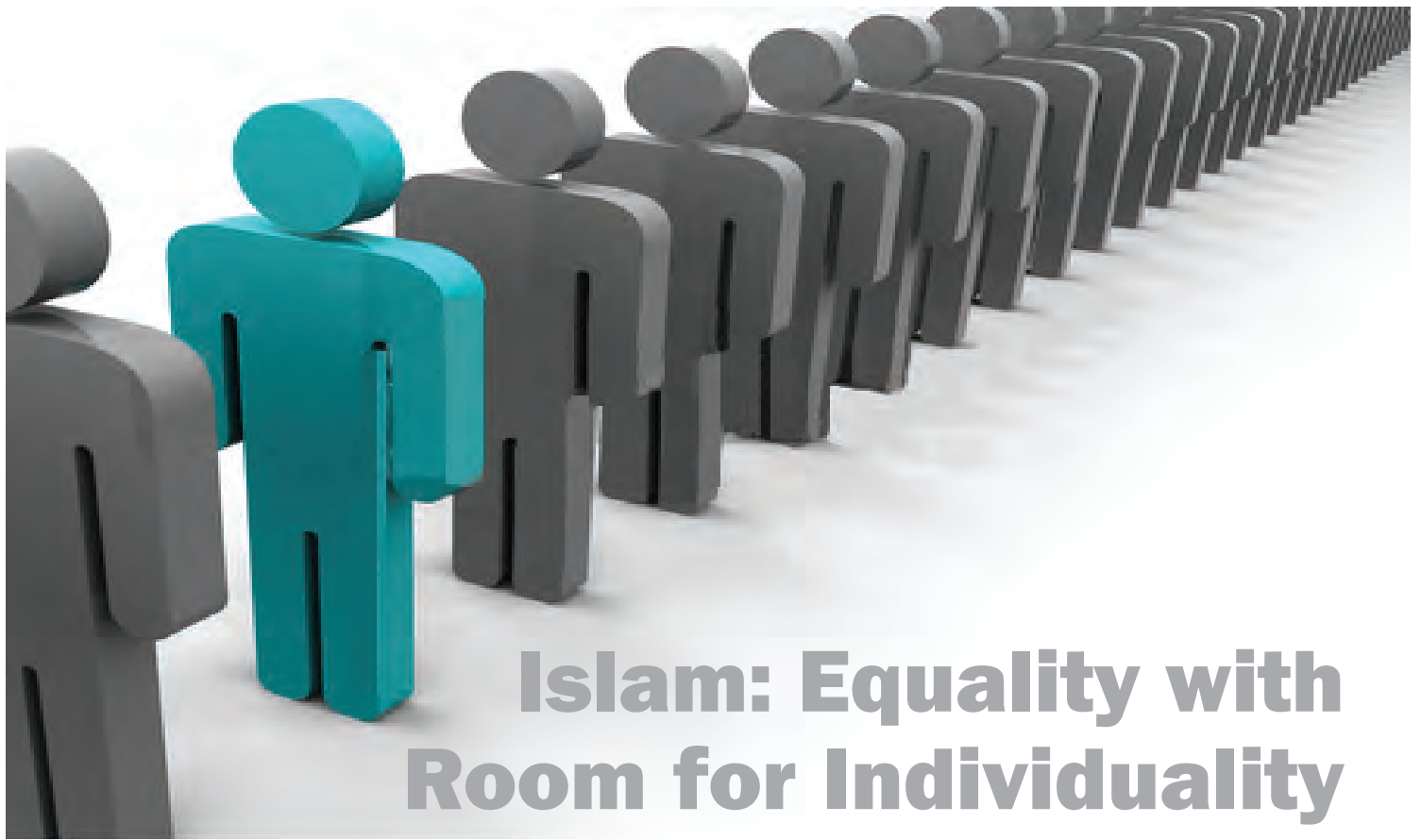
The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in America in 1920 and has created a revolutionary change in the lives of its members. Within the American Ahmadiyya Muslim Community there are no problems of drug or alcohol abuse; no problems of crime or gang violence; and no thefts or incarcerations. The pure teachings of Islam transform the lives of American Ahmadi Muslims

and help them develop into some of society's most productive citizens. Our professions span the entire spectrum —doctors, lawyers, accountants, engineers, teachers, architects, journalists, scientists, government workers, taxi-drivers, factory workers, writers, musicians, and artists. Ahmadi Muslims are concerned parents, conscientious neighbors, and community activists.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community represents the renaissance of Islam in America, which was and still is in its pure essence, without any cultural or religious innovations that may disfigure its original

teachings. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community offers a clear presentation of Islam's wisdom and philosophy as derived from the Holy Qur'an and the recorded practice of the Holy Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him).

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA has an impeccable history of nonviolence and has always advocated true Islamic principles leading toward peace and love. The philosophy behind "Love For All Hatred For None" signals our "moderate" stance toward that end.



Islam: Equality with Room for Individuality

A factor that dismantles the unity of nations is the absence of equality between them. The Holy Prophet of Islam^{saw} played a leading role in doing away with and erasing the racial, color and caste-based distinctions that existed between various people of the time, and presented before the world an unmatched charter of equality. He gave shape to this charter by the following Qur'anic injunctions:

*O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female;
and We have made you into nations and tribes that you may
recognise one another. Verily, the most honorable among you, in
the Sight of Allah, is he who is the most righteous among you...*

(Ch.49:V.14)

This Qur'anic principle of equality was exemplified by the Prophet^{saw} on the occasion of his last sermon. His sermon can be summarized in these words: You are one brotherhood. All people are equal according to Islam. The Arab possesses no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab over an Arab. A white man is no way superior to a black man, nor for that matter, a black man to a white man, but only to the extent which a person exhibits righteousness and effort to attain it. According to Islam, there is no distinction in the reward one earns on the basis of color or progeny.

•The Holy Prophet(saw) – The Torchbearer of Humanity
Review of Religions, February 2010
Dr. Ijaz Ahmad Qamar - Canada

Establishment of justice

The establishment of peace requires the implementation of fairness and absolute justice; otherwise the resultant severe repercussions can destroy nations with dreadful consequences. The Holy Prophet^{saw} has therefore stressed that all, irrespective of their status, should be treated with absolute justice. The Qur'anic teaching is very clear on this subject:

Verily, Allah enjoins justice, and the doing of good to others; and giving like kindred... (Ch.16:V.91)

The required standard of justice is:

O ye who believe! be steadfast in the cause of Allah, bearing witness in equity; and let not a people's enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness... (Ch.5:V.9)

The Holy Prophet^{saw} is reported to have said that previous nations had been destroyed as they punished the weak segment of the society and let go those who were in high social status.

•The Holy Prophet(saw) – The Torchbearer of Humanity
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Women's Rights

Before the advent of the Prophet Muhammad Al-Mustafa(saw), the status of women was deplorable. Through his teachings, this status was uplifted to an extremely venerable place in the society. This is attributed to the Holy Prophet(saw), as we read in the Qur'an:

...And they (the women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them in equity. (Ch.2:V.229)

...and consort with them in kindness... (Ch.4:V.20)

In the Traditions of Bukhari, there is a specific saying of the Prophet(saw) to the effect that one who treats his wife in an excellent manner is very close to his God. In the cultural arena, the Holy Prophet(saw) allotted the same rights to women as those of men, keeping in view their respective God-given characteristics. Islam was the first religion that provided women with the right of inheritance. In the matter of inheritance she receives a specified share from the assets of her relatives. She is the full owner of her wealth and savings, and is free to do with her property or money as she pleases. And, of course, in the spiritual sense men and women are declared of equal status as set forth in the Qur'an:

...‘I will allow not the work of any worker from among you, whether male or female, to be lost. You are from one another... (Ch.3:V.196)

The Holy Prophet(saw) was so sensitive of women's feelings that once, when he was leading prayers, he heard a child crying and finished the prayers quickly. Afterwards he explained that, upon hearing the cry of the child, he thought that the child's mother must also have been troubled; hence he concluded the service so that she could attend to the child. He would always advise those who had to leave on journey to try and return home as soon as possible so that their wives and children would not feel the pains of separation for too long. He placed great stress on kindness to women, and would often say that if a father took it upon himself to educate his daughters and care for their upbringing, God would save him from the hell-fire. He said:

“Woman has been created from a rib and the most crooked part of the rib is the uppermost. If you try to straighten it you will break it and if you leave it alone it will remain crooked. So treat women kindly.”

***•The Holy Prophet(saw) – The Torchbearer of Humanity
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Liwa-e-Ahmadiyya (Ahmadiyya Flag)

Islam, which means ‘peace and surrender to the will of Allah,’ is the fastest growing religion in the world. It was founded by the Prophet Muhammad nearly 1400 years ago in Arabia. Muhammad received a revelation from Allah in which he was told that Islam was the final and complete religion for mankind. He said that Allah alone was worthy of being worshipped and nothing else was equal to Him. Muhammad helped the poor, liberated slaves and established equal rights for women. He told his followers to be patient during hardship and to pray to Allah. His mission was to eradicate evil and iniquity and implant goodness and piety in the world. Muhammad led a simple, pious and peaceful life. He was well known for his willingness to help others, which earned him the titles of *Siddiq* (meaning ‘truthful’) and *Amin* (meaning ‘honest’). The Holy Qur’an is the holy book of Islam. It is the word of Allah and was revealed to Muhammad over a period of twenty-three years. It is spread over thirty parts and has one hundred and fourteen chapters. It contains a vast array of teachings and provides a comprehensive code of conduct for mankind. It also contains numerous prophecies, many of which have been fulfilled and many that remain to be fulfilled.

A principal article of faith in Islam is the belief in all prophets and religious teachers appointed by God, including Muhammad, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Krishna, Buddha, Confucius, and Zarathushtra (peace be upon them all). All prophets and religious teachers aimed to reform humanity and to establish mankind’s communion with God – the Creator. Islam aims to establish peace among all religions by attesting to the truth of the original teachings of all prophets and religious teachers. Islam also emphasizes that men and women are equal before Allah and only righteous deeds elevate one person above another. Islam reinforces the concept of humanity and respect for individual liberty. Man is free to choose his own faith without compulsion.

The Birth of the Ahmadiyya Community

As predicted in their Holy scriptures, the followers of all great religions awaited the advent of a Promised One in the Latter Days. The Hindus awaited Krishna, the Jews and Christians the Messiah, the Buddhists the Buddha and the Muslims the al-Imam al-Mahdi, as well as the Messiah. In the late Nineteenth Century, from a tiny and remote hamlet

in Qadian (Punjab), India, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad announced to the world that only one such person representing all the Promised Ones was to appear who would ultimately bring humanity into the fold of one universal religion. Under divine guidance, Hadhrat Ahmad claimed to be that Promised One who was awaited by all people of faith. On March 23, 1889, he founded the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

A central focus of Hazrat Ahmad’s mission was to revive and rejuvenate the true teachings of Islam as espoused and practiced by the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad. He preached that Islam, distilled to its essential core, is a religion of peace. It meets the demands and challenges of the changing world. It permits no exploitation, be it social, political, economic or religious. It espouses absolute morality and enjoins justice and fairness to friends and foes alike, in every sphere of human interest. Ahmadi Muslims firmly believe that Islam is the cure for all maladies and ailments of suffering in humanity today. Islam teaches us that unless man learns to live at peace with himself and his fellow human beings, he cannot live at peace with God.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community today is international in scope, with communities



“I Will Cause Thy Message To Reach The Corners Of The Earth”

established in over 170 countries, including Africa, Americas, Asia, Australia and Europe, and members numbering in the millions. It is one of the most dynamic and positive religious forces today. Members of the Community have included a Nobel prize winner in Physics (the late Prof. Abdus Salam) and a Chief Justice of the International Court of Justice and President of the United Nations General Assembly (the late Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan). Members of the Community have earned the distinction of being law-abiding, peaceful, hard-working and benevolent citizens all over the world.

Progress of the Ahmadiyya Community

The institution of Khilafat — the spiritual system of leadership in Islam — sustains Ahmadiyyat's progress. Hadhrat Ahmad's first successor was Hadhrat Maulvi Nooruddin^{ra}, a renowned scholar of the Holy Qur'an and an eminent physician. In 1914 he was succeeded by Hadhrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad — a profound scholar of Islamic studies who also enjoyed a vast knowledge of other religions. He led the Community for fifty-one years and firmly laid the foundation of Ahmadiyyat as an international community. The third successor was Hadhrat Mirza

Nasir Ahmad, a distinguished educationalist, who placed great emphasis on service to Africa. In 1982, Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad was elected as the fourth successor. During his leadership, he projected the wonderful teachings of Islam into the twenty-first century on a truly global scale through numerous community projects and the creation of a unique satellite television channel. His passing away in April 2003 was marked by condolences from some of the world's leading public figures. Government authorities assisted in his funeral procession and accorded him full honors with official protocol. The Community is now passing through another golden era of a fifth Khalifa, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, who holds the worldwide Ahmadiyya Community together as one. He ensures that every step taken under his leadership is in the right direction. The Khalifa is particularly dedicated to removing misconceptions of Islam in the world's eye and extolling Islam's pure virtues.

Publications

The Community actively translates and publishes literature that provides a better understanding of Islam and promotes positive and peaceful inter-faith dialogue, including a monthly English magazine initiated by Hadhrat Ahmad himself in 1901 — *The Re-*

view of Religions. The community has also translated the Holy Qur'an in over 50 languages of the world, including Chinese, Russian, Japanese, German and Italian.

Humanitarianism

The Community has established schools throughout the world, several of which have become some of the most sought after institutions in their respective countries. The Community is noted for its active engagement in social welfare and in meeting the medical and educational needs, not only of its own members, but also of the communities in which they reside. The Community has also opened up many medical clinics and hospitals that offer free medical assistance. In Africa these efforts have served the local communities for decades. The Community has launched several social projects for developing countries in Africa and Asia, and to assist victims of wars and natural disasters, such as in India, Japan, Turkey, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Humanity First, USA is a charitable trust established by the Community to promote and safeguard the preservation of human life and dignity. It is a nonpolitical, non-sectarian international relief and development agency that works with communities around the globe to improve the quality of life for some of the world's poorest

and most vulnerable people. Members of the Community serve humanity through selfless sacrifices, devotion and love.

MTA International Television

MTA emerged in 1992 with the aim of providing a positive alternative in the broadcasting world. It is the brainchild of the fourth Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Community, Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, and ever since its inception, MTA has been a unique channel in many respects. Its focus lies in producing programs that can be enjoyed by people of all ages at all times. MTA's future is not dependant upon commercial sponsorships or license fees, thus allowing it to concentrate on producing a variety of programs. These include subject matters such as international news, sports, science, medicine, alternative therapies, learning languages, children's shows, documentaries, travel and religion. MTA broadcasts its state-of-the-art digital service throughout the world from six satellites.

Annual Convention

On December 27, 1891, a gathering (Jalsa) of the Ahmadiyya Community was held in Qadian, India, in which seventy-five persons participated. The conference was a great success, and Hazrat Ahmad announced that such a gathering for three days of the community should be held every year. The annual event highlights the Community's calendar and is held at different times during the year in a number of countries. The purpose of these gatherings is to review the work done in the previous year and benefit from talks and speeches presented by learned scholars and the Khalifa on topics covering God, Islam, Ahmadiyyat, comparative religions, and economic, social and political problems and their remedies. The Ahmadi Muslims participating in these gatherings come from all parts of the world. They take this opportunity not only to increase their religious knowledge and spiritual energy, but also to revive old friendships.

Islam Today

In the new millennium, Islam continues to be a dominant religion of the world. Its vibrant teachings remain as relevant today as they were during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad. It remains a universal religion. The guidance that

emanates from the Qur'an and from the example of Prophet Muhammad is at one with the nature of man and his environment.

Today's media undoubtedly influences the world. Images, text, headlines and news can just as easily project false impressions as they can project true facts. Although misreporting and misinformation are not always confined to religion, an inaccurate account of any true religious belief can result in mass prejudice and injustice. Unclear and biased reporting of Islam has been prevalent for many years, especially with regards to terrorism and war. The clear and true understanding of Islam can only be found in its core teachings, and such a study will reveal a religion that not only abhors violence but actually promotes peace at all levels – even during times of war.

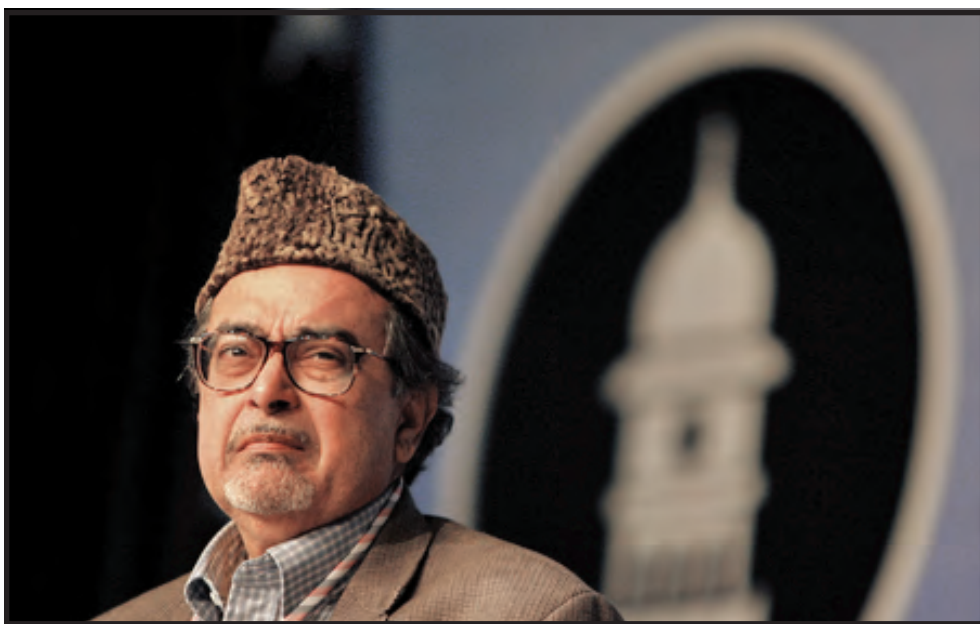
Islam is a comprehensive religion. It realizes that with human weakness, ambition and dynamism, occasions will arise when dispute,

conflict and even wars will be inevitable. Although Islam forbids initiation of war or aggression, when it becomes inevitable for Muslims to fight a defensive war, the teachings of Islam lay down strict guidelines. For instance, the freedom and rights of non-combatants must be respected. The old and infirm, women and children must be protected from any harm. Residential properties must be left intact, and crops and plantations must not be damaged. Even when it comes to opponents in the battlefield, Islam enjoins that if the enemy sues for peace, the hostilities must stop and peace must be accepted. Even from this brief description, one can understand that in Islam, there is no room for terrorism in any form. On the contrary, religious interaction and harmony are encouraged, and the Ahmadiyya Community all over the world is recognized as a peaceful and highly respected Community that encourages and promotes peace.





Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad ^{at}, the Head of the international Ahmadiyya Muslim Community



Dr. Ahsanullah Zafar, Ameer, Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA

Love for all, Hatred For None

Ahmadiyya community today reflects the teachings of Prophet Muhammad through the 2nd Messiah, emphasizing the commandments of love and compassion.

We hear beautiful teachings in the mosques and churches such as: “Love thy enemy”. What does it really mean and where and how is it practiced? For most people it is a good slogan, makes them feel good but has no practical implication. The community of the 2nd Messiah is the one that has put it into practice.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad's^{saw} Example: Keeping Company with Slaves and Poor Muslims

By Alhaji Dhul Waqar Yaqub

One day the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw} was sitting with Salman (Persian ex-slave), Bilal ibn Rabah (African ex-slave), Ammar (Yemeni ex-slave), Suhayb (Roman ex-slave), Khabbab (African ex-slave and the 6th person to accept Islam) and a group of poor Muslims. When some unbelievers passed by and saw these 'unimportant' people with the Prophet, they said, "Have you chosen these persons from among your people? Do you want us to follow you along side them? Has Allah bestowed His favor on them, that they have believed, and not us? You better remove them from around you; if you do so, then perhaps we would follow you." The Prophet did not agree to their demand, and Allah sent down the following verses in respect to this scenario.

"And do not drive away those who call upon their Lord in the morning and the evening seeking His pleasure. Thou are not accountable for them nor are they at all accountable for thee. In case you do it you would be counted as the unjust. In this way have We made a distinction in some of them from the other with the result that they say: Are these lowly ones whom Allah has favored by choosing them from among us? Does not Allah know best the grateful? And when those who believe in Our signs come to you, say: "Peace be upon you, your Lord has taken Himself the rule of mercy" (Holy Qur'an 6:53-55)

Salman, Bilal, and 'Ammar said,

"When Allah revealed these verses, the Prophet turned towards us, called us to come nearer to him, and said, 'Your Lord has ordained mercy on Himself.' Then we used to sit with him, and when he wanted to stand up to leave, he did so. Then Allah revealed:

"And keep yourself attached to those who call upon their Lord morning and evening, constantly seeking His pleasure; and let not thine eyes pass beyond them, seeking the adornment of the life of the world;..." (Holy Qur'an 18:29)

"When this was revealed, the Prophet used to make us sit so near him that our thighs almost touched his thighs; and he did not stand up before us. When we felt that the time had come for him to stand, we took his leave; and then he stood up after we had gone. And he used to say to us, 'I thank God, who did not take me out of this world until He ordered me to keep patience with [this] group of my community. I shall spend my life with you, and after death, shall remain with you.' " *

Back in the days of the Holy Prophet Prophet Muhammad^{saw} many of those who

were attracted to Islam were ex-slaves and poor people. Like wise, in America today, many of those who have accepted Islam are ex-slaves and poor people. This scenario has repeated itself going back, in American history, to the Islamic movement, which began here in the early 1900's. During the 1920's, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community began to preach the true

Islam, which was taught and practiced by the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}.

The Occident is the 'unbeliever" in this day and age. They are the people who look upon themselves as being above the ordinary, belong to what is called higher society and would consider it beneath them to join a divine movement where there are ex-slaves and the poor in it. The mes-

sage of material prosperity, sympathy, kindness, godliness and gentle behavior, plays magic on ears with its mellow music. It is this world of romance which generally attracts people to Occidental culture. However, at the same time they maintain systems that result in cruelty, suppression, gross injustice and large scale subjugation of defenseless ex-slaves and the poor from having an equal footing with them.

True Islam is the way to end this inhuman cruelty and the true followers of Islam will dismantle those systems, not by physical means, but by spiritual means. The true representatives of Islam will be engaged in prayer and divine worship day and night. Ex-slaves and the poor have the promise of success and Divine Mercy from Almighty Allah.

Endnotes:

* Source: Al-Majlisi, M.B., Hayatul Qulub, vol. II, Tehran: Kitabfurushi-e Islamia, 1371 AH, pp.562-3; Abu Naim Ahmad al-Isfahani, Hilyatul Awliya, vol. I, Beirut, 1967, pp. 146-7



The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Philadelphia was the scene of this photo, which was taken in 1972, in front of the Philadelphia, PA mission house.

Leave Your Baggage at the Door

By Alhaji Dhul Waqar Yaqub

Through the eyes of a “convert.”

The American Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is racially and ethnically diverse. Positive social and religious interaction between Ahmadi Muslims of different racial and ethnic groups is encouraged. As a result our Community is one of the most significant movements in the history of Islam in the United States, providing the first multi-racial model for American Islam. In this regard, the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, set the following goals:

To propagate Islam; to think out ways and means of promoting the welfare of new converts to Islam in Europe and America; to further the cause of righteousness, purity and moral excellence throughout the world, to eradicate evil habits and customs;[...]



To meet these lofty goals requires struggle and the will to work at community development. There are some personal effects (psychological dysfunction or “baggage”), which African Americans may carry coming into the American Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. This baggage has been shaped as a result of living in a racist society. Islam demands that we rise above that. Allah has given us the intellectual,

moral and spiritual tools to overcome the “stuff.” The resulting effect of not sorting through the bag and throwing away useless clutter may be the accumulation of so much “stuff” that the bag becomes a drag. Some of the “stuff” in the baggage may be:

1. Over sensitivity to someone speaking Urdu, Punjabi, Pustho, Hausa, or Arabic in the presence of English-only speaking Americans.

This is a major issue with some African Americans. Leaving aside that it's impolite to speak another language in the presence of someone who doesn't understand, it sets up a condition where African Americans feel left out and isolated at one extreme or they feel that you are talking about them negatively at the other extreme. I'm sure this happens as a result of meanness, but most of the times our African, Arab or Asian Ahmadi slip or forget. A healthy relationship cemented with friendship and love can handle a slip or forgetfulness.

This reminds me of a funny occurrence. A Pakistani and African American Ahmadi were going at each other because of the "Urdu" thing. The African American was telling the Pakistani how wrong he was for speaking Urdu and the Pakistani was trying to tell him that he didn't mean it and that the Urdu just came out. The African American won't let up until the Pakistani retorted back saying, "You people do the same as we do. When you're in your groups you talk a language I don't understand." The African American said, "How so? I speak English man!" The Pakistan said, "The hell you do. What in the world does this mean? `Yeah...I'm hip I'm hip. I slid up to home boy myself and popped a quiz on him and waited for the tip. And when he didn't come-back I screamed on him tough. He looked so pitiful, with his none comeback self, and I had to let him go.' The Pakistani continued by saying, "That's not English. That's a language you people speak in front of us and we don't understand it."

Our Pakistani brother observed and spoke the truth. African Americans have a vernacular English that's all their own and think nothing about speaking it in front of Pakistanis.

Well...the bottom line is this: Every people have their habits and there is nothing so bad that a little tolerance can't remedy.

2. Curry or Pakistani food. This is another sore spot with some African Americans. At formal Community events African Americans with '*complaining about the food*' stuff in their bag. We suggest that our brothers look at the choices of eating at the event, bring your own food or go to McDonald's and have a Mac Attack.

3. Multi-Ethnic Marriages: African American men had/have notions that African, Arab, Asians, or Indians didn't want them to marry immigrant ladies. It's not uncommon for our Pakistani brethren to be accused of racism, if they did not allow an African American to marry their daughter.

Observing someone who had that "stuff" in their bag it can be very easily said, "I won't let him marry my daughter either. Here is a person who has been an Ahmadi less than a year; starting page ten of the Yassarnul Qur'an, memorized only the 4th line of Sura Fatiha; didn't finish high school, and working a part-time job at a warehouse. Give me a break."

On the other hand I've seen African American men wanting to marry an Asian lady. She could have been from Africa or Saudi Arabia for that matter, but the idea is that she would have to come from a *Muslim country* or was a *born Muslim* as opposed to

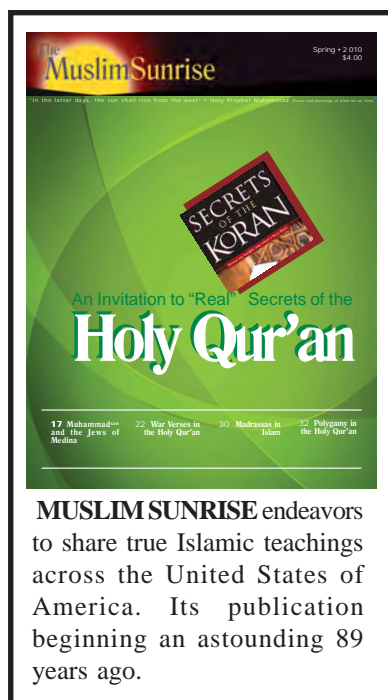
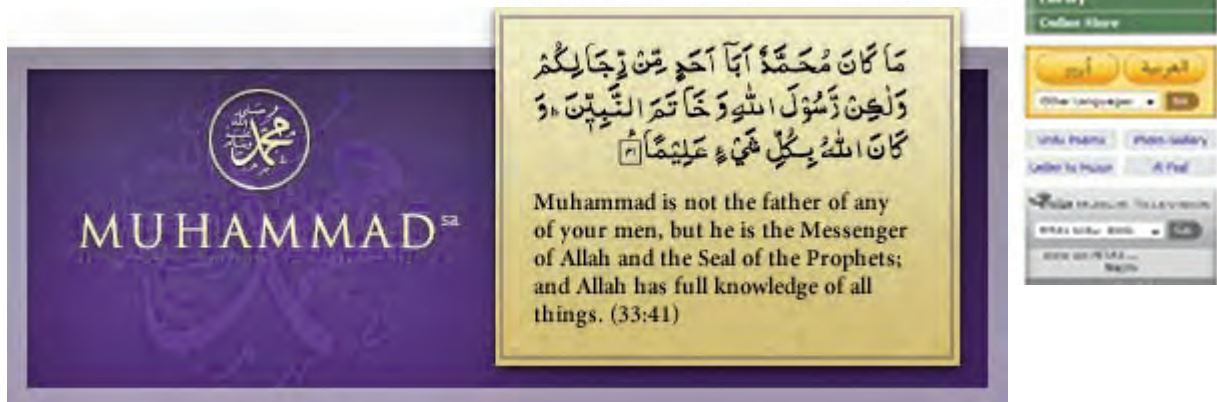
marrying a lady that wasn't a *born Muslim* or wasn't raised in a *Muslim country*. Somehow they have the thought that by marrying a *born Muslim* from *Muslim country* that there was an automatic ticket to paradise that went with the marriage or that their Islam would be easier. All that can be said here is, "My Lord, have mercy on their soul."

African Americans who married African, Arab, Pakistani or Indian ladies/men have done well. There are some that haven't done well. There are some Pakistani or Arab men who married African American ladies and it turned out to be a "green card" marriage lasting less than two years. Then there was an Indian lady who married an African American man and within one year the marriage went bad. She pressed her husband to move her family (mother, father and her sisters) to America and into their house. The family was still in India. After the wife got her green card he was out and the family was in America in his house.

In the light of the goals of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, the Promised Messiah "*to further the cause of righteousness, purity and moral excellence throughout the world, to eradicate evil habits and customs*" and given the fact that our youth will inherit the illnesses of the various African, Asian, and American cultural nuances (be they racism, class-ism, or social status-ism) to solve, we at least owe them the remedy to work with. Our Khalifa said: "...*change your attitude not because you want to gain the new converts but because you yourselves will be annihilated if the present attitude prevails.*"

For a wealth of information: **Alislam.Org**

...Everything you need to know about Islam, Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, Ahmadiyyat, Khilafat, Holy Qur'an with commentary.



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- Abortion,
- Marriage and Divorce,
- Women Issues

There are a lot of videos chock full of excellent information on Ahmadiyyat to be found on YouTube including Muslim Television Ahmadiyya Online.





Conditions of Initiation The Bai'at Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian

The Promised Messiah and Mahdi (peace be upon him)

The initiate shall solemnly promise:

1 That he/she shall abstain from Shirk (association of any partner with God) right up to the day of his/her death.

2 That he/she shall keep away from falsehood, fornication, adultery, trespasses of the eye, debauchery, dissipation, cruelty, dishonesty, mischief and rebellion; and will not permit himself/herself to be carried away by passions, however strong they might be.

3 That he/she shall regularly offer the five daily prayers in accordance with the com-

mandments of God and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him); and shall try his/her best to be regular in offering the Tahajud (pre-dawn supererogatory prayers) and invoking Darood (blessings) on the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him); that he/she shall make it his/her daily routine to ask forgiveness for his/her sins, to remember the bounties of God and to praise and glorify Him.

4 That under the impulse of any passions, he/she shall cause no harm whatsoever to the creatures of Allah in general, and Muslims in particular, neither by his/her tongue nor by his/her hands nor by any other means.

5 That he/she shall remain faithful to God in all circumstances of life, in sorrow and happiness, adversity and prosperity, in felicity and trial; and shall in all conditions remain resigned to the decree of Allah and keep himself/herself ready to face all kinds of indignities and sufferings in His way and shall never turn away from it at the onslaught of any misfortune; on the contrary, he/she shall march forward.

6 That he/she shall refrain from following un-islamic customs and lustful inclinations, and shall completely submit himself/herself to the authority of the Holy Quran; and shall make the Word of God and the Sayings of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) the guiding principle in every walk of his/her life.

In March 1903, on the day of 'Eid, some Companionsra were sitting together and the Promised Messiah said: Listen all of you who have taken *bai'at* today and those who have taken *bai'at* before, I would like to say a few words by way of advice. Listen to them carefully. *Bai'at* that you have taken today is *bai'at* of repentance. Repentance is of two types. One from the previous sins. That is, to reform oneself from the mistakes committed before and to make recompense as far as possible to set right the damage done by them.

The second is to safeguard oneself from sins there after and to save oneself from the fire. Almighty Allah has promised that with repentance all prior sins are forgiven provided that the repentance is made with a true heart and pure intent and does not contain any secret mischief in any corner of the heart. Allah knows the hidden secrets of the hearts; He cannot be misled by anyone. Do not try to mislead Him. Make repentance in His presence with truthfulness, not hypocrisy. The repentance is not something extra or useless for man. Its impact is not limited to the Day of Judgement; rather, it straightens both worldly affairs and the faith. The repentant achieves peace and prosperity, both in this life and in the life to come. (*Malfuzat*, vol. 5. pp. 187–188)

7 That he/she shall entirely give up pride and vanity and shall pass all his/her life in humbleness, cheerfulness, forbearance and meekness.

8 That he/she shall hold faith, the honor of faith, and the cause of Islam dearer to him/her than his/her life, wealth, honor, children and all other dear ones.

9 That he/she shall keep himself/herself occupied in the service of God's creatures for His sake only; and shall endeavor to benefit mankind to the best of his/her God-given abilities and powers.

10 That he/she shall enter into a bond of brotherhood with this humble servant of God, pledging obedience to me in everything good, for the sake of Allah, and remain faithful to it till the day of his/her death; that he/she shall exert such a high devotion in the observance of this bond as is not to be found in any other worldly relationship and connections demanding devoted dutifulness.

(Translated from *Ishtehar Takmeel-e-Tabligh*, January 12, 1889)

Perfecting your faith through financial and personal sacrifice

As a new member of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community you are likely to hear many requests for financial giving. In our community there are many, many schemes for financial giving. You will field request for monthly Chanda Aam, our mandatory subscription dues, as well as auxiliary monthly dues from the Khuddam (youth), Lajna (women) and Ansar (gentlemen). You may also hear about special schemes for annual dues such as Waqf-e-Jadid or Tehrik-e-Jadid among others. In fact in the publication An Introduction to Financial Sacrifice, our community lays out all of the mandatory and optional financial schemes in which Ahmadi Muslims are expected to at some point participate.

In our society, especially at the present time, these multiple and frequent calls for “financial sacrifices” as we often call it might be overwhelming. In fact in some cases you might feel like you are being pressured. Understandably, you might begin to wonder if you can sustain these sacrifices and maintain your own lifestyle. When we understand the wisdom of financial sacrifice however, these misgivings quickly vanish.

The reason we accept the Promised Messiah (as) is because he calls us to the pure truth of Islam and the reality of personal spiritual transformation. This means that in his teaching - the true Qur’anic teaching - are those elements that reform us and purify us. There is a subtle but fundamental truth between sacrifice, financial and otherwise - and ones spiritual purification. The Qur’an teaches us that financial sacrifice is required of us Muslims. In fact the Qur’an defines a Muslim as “those who believe in the unseen, observe prayer and spend out of that which they love (Al Baqara). This means that your new Muslim identity is one who spends in the way of Allah. The Holy Book goes on to tell us that we should “lend to Allah a goodly loan so that he may multiply it many times over (2:246)”. It pleads with us to spend out of our wealth before the time comes when no act of goodness or virtue will be possible anymore (2:255).

A point the Qur’an further puts forward is that to not spend in God’s cause is to put ourselves in spiritual and physical danger. It says “And spend in the cause of Allah, and cast not yourselves into ruin with your own hands (2:196). It tells us multiple times that those who spend their wealth in Allah’s favor get their reward directly from Allah himself. As a new member your spiritual development - the desire of your heart is linked to financial sacrifice. What the Qur’an is here saying is that the object you seek - God’s love and true relationships with your fellow brothers and sisters is in part obtained directly from your financial giving.

How then do you make this transition to become a willing and conscious giver? In our community the Promised Messiah (as) explains that unlike the time of the Holy Prophet (saws) there are no religious wars. So unlike in the time of the early Muslims, we are not required to sacrifice our lives for what we believe. He explains, “What a

The Qur’an teaches us that financial sacrifice is required of us Muslims. In fact the Qur’an defines a Muslim as “those who believe in the unseen, observe prayer and spend out of that which they love (Al Baqara). This means that your new Muslim identity is one who spends in the way of Allah.

blessed time this is! No one is asked to lay down his life. This is not the time for offering the ultimate sacrifice; rather it is the time to spend out of one’s possessions, according to one’s means”. (An Introduction to Financial Sacrifice p.7)

As a result of this understanding, the Promised Messiah asked us to give obligatory donations as well as voluntary donations. The main donation called Chanda Aam (regular subscription) has a payment rate of 1/16th of one’s income from all sources, after payment of taxes and compulsory insurance. Additionally, there is a payment of 1/120 for chanda jalsa salana (subscription for annual convention). Simply stated chanda aam is \$0.06 of a dollar, and Chanda Jalsa Salana is \$0.01 of a dollar. In total the obligatory amounts are \$0.07 of a dollar. The total amount of our subscription is therefore less than 10 cents of every dollar! We are required to pay this amount to the local finance secretary.

There is no doubt we have willingly and seriously signed on to the baiat with Hazrat Ahmad the Promised Messiah. Thus we join this spiritual organization under the divine leadership of Khalifatul Masih (Successor of the Messiah). We must recognize that either chanda aam (regular subscriptions) is also a prerequisite of participation in the organization. Since prayer, fasting and belief are private aspect of one’s faith, the only true public show and demonstration of one’s

Above all remember that sacrifice and financial giving is a universal principle and a promise from Allah. Failure to participate even in the face of meagre resources will thwart your spiritual growth.

commitment is our monthly subscriptions. We must therefore secure our rights and voice in this new family by demonstrating consistency and regularity in monthly subscriptions. No one knows our income. Furthermore no one is likely to ask what a person's income is. It is left to you our new member to decide what your annual pledge will be based on the chanda aam and chanda jalsa salana calculations. However having made the pledge, you should recognize that you are now under an obligation to pay it. Without this your ties with the community will be tenuous and you will not feel as if you have fully joined the family.

Additionally we have voluntary schemes in which we can participate. Considering the blessings that we are seeking contribution to these schemes along with regular monthly subscription is necessary and important. What this means however is that we have to learn to live within our means. In 1934 and in 1957 the second Khalifa of our community and a worldwide Islamic reformer initiated schemes to help us shape our personal finances. In these schemes Tehrik-e-Jadid (1934) and Waqf-e-Jadid (1954) he advised us to do a number of things to manage personal finances. Some notable aspect of this is the following:

Live a simple life

This in part means to live within our means, eat meals that we can afford and live in a situation where we can increase our financial giving without the added pressure of chasing materialism. Recognize for example that purchasing fast food regularly adds up. Perhaps restricting these meals and travelling with a packed lunch or snack will help you to save money. Funds you save from this effort can be applied to financial sacrifice.

Become more independent

Learn to work with our own hands. Limit de-

pendency on others. Although we all have jobs or professions of varying kinds it is good to perfect some other skill that can be used to make supplemental funds. Such vocations as computer repair, tutoring, lawn service, home repair, baking, cooking, handyman etc., allow us to add supplemental income. Such income can increase our funds and allow us to make financial sacrifices more easily.

Seek more education

Education beyond high school is financially lucrative. Take the time to enroll in a local community college, vocational school or go back and work on that degree that you promised yourself you would. We know that people with more education makes more income over time. Moreover this will increase your capacity and worth in your eyes as well as in that of your family. Today, even more Islamic education can be financially lucrative. States and local governments are looking for Muslim chaplains to work in prisons, schools and even at airports. Take the time to enroll in the online classes that the community offers in order to learn Qur'an and Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (saws).

Preach the faith

If you are unemployed and have some time volunteer for service to the community (Waqf-e-Ardhi). These programs allow you to go to the center or to other places and among other things spread the faith. Such experiences aside from being naturally enriching and faith inspiring, they help you to sacrifice. Giving time is an important lifestyle change and helps you to develop the will and practice of personal sacrifice.

Establish prayer

Pray especially for one to be able to sacrifice financially in Allah's cause. An essential way to perfect one's faith is through prayer. In praying

that Allah increases your capacity, you will see these blessings. You will then have concrete examples of Allah fulfilling his promise. Armed with this experience and assurance one grows from strength to strength both in prayer as well as in sacrifices.

Support the community

Serve the community by sacrificing time and efforts in its cause. Through organizations such as Humanity First as well as your local mosque, take the time to offer sacrifices. These activities help you to value the community and to grow within it. It also helps you to associate with other people who give sacrifice and helps you to learn to do this effectively and gradually.

Financial sacrifice as well as sacrifice of time and other attributes are critical to one's spiritual progress in Islam. At first it appears to be a large responsibility. However as you grow in your faith it becomes more natural. If at first you are timid about these lifestyle changes and financial sacrifices, begin by sacrificing in one or more of the annual schemes. The Waqf-e-Jadid scheme is one annual scheme that has a minimum rate of \$12 per year. Begin by making this sacrifice, commit to prayer and Allah will increase your capacity to give more.

Above all remember that sacrifice and financial giving is a universal principle and a promise from Allah. Failure to participate even in the face of meagre resources will thwart your spiritual growth. Joining the community is a first step. One must develop the assurance and prove Allah through his blessings. The Promised Messiah taught us that "one cannot love two things". We must demonstrate our love of Allah and our desire to be close to him by making financial sacrifices in his cause.

Transcript of
comments made
this month by
Naseem Mahdi, national vice
president of the Ahmadiyya
Muslim Community,:

**"We live in an expanding
universe but the world is
shrinking daily and it is so
highly important for us all to
discover and follow the paths
that lead to peace.**

**"I am going to make a few
brief comments prompted by
the recent attempted bombing
in New York, but necessitated
by much broader
considerations.**

**"Islam condemns terrorism
unreservedly and totally.**

"The Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, India, had declared over 120 years ago that there is no place or justification found in Islam for violence whatsoever.

"He said that Islam requires all Muslims to live in peace and harmony wherever they may be.

"It is thus the duty and responsibility of all Muslims living in the U.S. to be loyal to the flag and to be law-abiding citizens.

"It is clear from the events happening all around that a small, fanatic, extremist minority of Muslims has hijacked the faith and continues to mislead and misguide the Muslims and ruin their total life.

"In my considered opinion, such fanatics present a distorted view of Islam based on false and misguided interpretations.

"For example such people say that it is not necessary for a Muslim to follow any non-Islamic government...This is utterly false.

Terrorism has no place in Islam

I S L A M

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P E A C E

It is the duty and responsibility of all Muslims living in the U.S. to be loyal to the flag and to be law-abiding citizens.

"If the vast majority of reasonable, peace-loving and law-abiding population of Muslims living in the US do not speak out and speak out loudly this will continue and ultimately ruin the lives, economic and social, of all Muslims and the community at large.

"I am calling today on ALL MUSLIMS IN THE U.S. to join me in condemning all actions of violence and terror caused or carried out by anyone whoever he or she may be.

"I call on all of them to boldly claim and express with their tongue and action that they are loyal and law-abiding and obedient citizens of the United States of America.

"This is fully in accord with the teachings of Muhammad, peace be on him, the Holy Founder of Islam, who said that *hubbul watanay minal eeman*.

"Love of one's homeland, one's place of residence, is a part of the Muslim's faith..

"It is high time that Muslims living in the U.S. wake up to their responsibilities and declare openly and repeatedly and loudly that they stand for peace and loyalty and are proud of it and that this is in fact what Islam itself requires of them.

"Let me end by being totally forthright.

"I say to those among Muslims living in the U.S. who are not loyal or who do not want to be loyal that they are benefiting and enjoying all that this open, free, country has to offer and yet they say that their loyalties are to another country or government.

"I want to say to such people that they are not only living a false and hypocritical life but that they are thus also ungrateful and my advice to them is to be bold and leave and go and live in the lands where their loyalties belong."

American Muslims must demonstrate loyalty, patriotism

By Saad Ahmad

The attempted terrorist attack on New York earlier this month has once again brought Muslims in the United States under a microscope. One positive aspect is that at least one Muslim group in the US, which happens to be one of the oldest in the US as well, Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (www.alislam.org), has once again accepted the challenge of defending Islam. This time with a simple message to all the lunatics who want to abuse Islam for their political agenda: Love it or Leave it.

Muslims all across US must take time to reflect. We must analyze if the mosques all across the US are trying to instill the Islamic injunction about loyalty to one's country among the youth. Quran clearly states in Chapter 4 verse 60 that it is the duty of every Muslims to follow the laws of the land where they live. In addition to this there are several verses in the Holy Quran that specifically tell Muslims to not create disorder. This raises a relevant question for the Muslims in the US, "Are we instilling these values in our children". We all get upset when fellow Muslims are humiliated at the airports or are subjected to profiling – question is what are we doing about it? We need to constantly remind our children and our youth that there must be no ambiguity in their minds about being loyal to the United States of America - under all situations. Muslim youth must not be confused on this is-



sue and must know that the Holy Prophet (peace be on him) said "Loving one's country is part of the faith". Mosques all across the US must become beacons of patriotism and not question marks about their loyalty.

It is high time for all Muslims to join the efforts of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community in this regard. They must make a clear stand that only those are welcome in their mosques that have a clear and unambiguous loyalty to the United States and those who are confused about it should just leave us alone. We will all prefer if they just get out of our country. We must be grate-

ful that Muslims enjoy more freedoms in US than any Muslim country in the world and in that respect US is the most Islamic country in the world. We can freely go to our mosques, offer our prayers anywhere and at any time, preach the message of Islam on any street corner, and tell our children about Islam without influence from the state. Forget the non-Muslim minorities; many Muslims do not enjoy these freedoms in the so-called Muslim countries. And then when we see lunatics take the name of Islam to threaten this land, all Muslims in US must be offended and take measures to rectify this.

We are fortunate that this great country allows us to organize and create change. If

some Muslims are upset about some aspects of the US policies; there are ways to turn their passion into results that are legitimate and legal – but at no point should this question their loyalty to this great country. I pray that Muslims all across US make every effort to educate their fellow Muslims and the younger generation about this very important teaching of Islam.

Northwestern Community Columnist Saad Ahmad is originally from Pakistan and has been living in Wisconsin since 1990. He attended the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and then stayed in the area. He works as a computer software consultant.

Perspectives

The United States of Islam: *Cultural diversity cemented with spirituality*



When I first departed for America in the 1966, I was seen off by my entire family at the Pakistani airport. In those days there were about 15 relatives and friends for each departing passenger. I said my good byes to my mother and other relatives, but there was a bigger hurdle – my Dad.

When it came time to finally say good bye to my father, we said the usual formalities and words of *salaam*. I could see his eyes full of love, affection and prayers for me but I sensed an uneasiness about him, as if he was holding something back. Although I knew he was shy and reserved, I thought he might hug me. It didn't happen. Public displays of affection were a bit awkward for my Dad.

While I was walking up the stairs of the airplane, I looked back at him still standing in clear view. His eyes still fixed on me full of love, affection and prayers, holding back the pain of losing a son and the fear that the words he didn't say might always remain unsaid. I thought I would come back in two or three years and I would give him that hug, knowing full well that if I didn't

initiate it, it wasn't going to happen.

As it turned out, I did return to Pakistan after about three years, but he wouldn't be there to receive me. He had passed away three months after I left him at the airport. That was my last memory of my father. I never got that hug.

That feeling of awkwardness is now one of regret. I wonder if he ever realized how much I appreciated him and the sacrifices he made for us – his family. The frustration and helplessness of not being able to hug him for the last time or hearing what was on his mind manages to squeeze tears from my eyes.

I arrived in Chicago and a few days later went to the local mosques for the first time. It was a strange experience for me. I was used to going to the mosque where everyone spoke the same language, was from the same area and was brought up in the same culture. The mosques here were different in many ways.

There were only about five Pakistanis and one member from India. The majority of the congregation were black. Yes, back then we referred to African Americans as blacks. There were blacks, whites and I guess we were somewhere in between, plus or minus. It was an era which proudly produced the *black is beautiful* slogan. They spoke English and obviously were from a different culture than the one I knew in Pakistan.

I saw faces of ladies at the mosque, whereas back in Pakistani mosques, women could not be seen. They used to be on the other side of a wall. We knew they were

there from the noise that came from that side but it was left to our imagination what they all looked like.

At this mosque, men were referred to as 'brothers' and all the ladies were 'sisters' even the Pakistani ones. I could even see the faces of Pakistani sisters.

Talking to the sisters was an awkward process. I was not accustomed to talking with women. I never knew what to say to them or what would get me in trouble. Like my father at the airport, I smiled, looked embarrassed and blushed but did not express myself. This embarrassment was multiplied by the handicap of speaking in a new language.

Talking to the African American brothers was also awkward because I couldn't speak English that fluently and I had to learn their unique accents and phrases. So most of the time we simply said *salaam* to each other and the usual *how are you* expressions and smiled. Then I would turn to the Pakistani members and talk in Urdu or Punjabi about what was happening. We discussed world problems and how the Pakistani government lacked the aptitude to solve its problems. Forty years later, we still discuss it. Obviously, the Pakistani government still hasn't listened to us and we're not wise enough to give up.

My lack of interaction with the African American Muslims was not the result of feeling superior to them. That never entered my mind. Similarly, I never felt any inclination that they were in any way inferior to white people. My hesitation was because of the language



My lack of interaction with the African American Muslims was not the result of feeling superior to them. That never entered my mind. Similarly, I never felt any inclination that they were in any way inferior to white people. My hesitation was because of the language and culture.

and culture. Among all my closest friends, I don't know of anyone who believes whites are superior to any other race. It's simply absurd thinking.

It is true that people in the sub-continent of India generally admire lighter complexion, but this is strictly a legacy from the British Empire. People tend to mimic those in power. Beauty is a physical manifestation of socially desired values. For example, those who have wealth in India and Pakistan tend to not have to work the fields, so their skin is lighter. There, lighter skin is considered a trait of beauty. On the contrary, those who have wealth in the West tend to have more time for leisure in the sun and enjoy getting tans. The West sees people with dark tans as a trait of beauty. However, those deeply rooted in Islam see righteousness as the socially desired value and therefore, cannot associate that with any physical attribute. Islamic beauty is seen as a spiritual light that emanates from a person, regardless of size, shape or color.

Our female Pakistani members also have cultural barriers communicating and socializing with the African American sisters. Many Pakistani ladies are not fluent in English because they choose not to work. When they see fellow Pakistani women they like to talk about clothes and jewelry. African American sisters don't wear the same clothes or the same jewelry. Shoes are probably the only common element but that simply can't sustain much of a conversation, although I'm sure some women will prove me wrong. Pakistani ladies are cordial and say *salaam* to the African American sisters

but then move on to the comfortable arena in the mosque where they can speak in Urdu, Punjabi or Pashto.

Over the years, I have become close friends with many of the African American brothers. We can sit together without speaking a word and neither one would complain about one not saying something to the other. I have invited several to my home for dinner parties and have taken them to lunch or dinner at the restaurants as well. I have noticed, though, that in all these years none of them has ever invited me to their homes. I never took it serious enough that I would stop inviting them...but it got me to start thinking. It is like the hug I never got from my father. I don't profess to be a psychiatrist so I can't perform a self-diagnosis, but I would have been thrilled even if I was invited for hot dogs and coffee. Yes, I am one of the few Pakistanis who would boast of eating hot dogs and drinking black coffee. It is just the gesture of the invitation that would have been significant. I know it is not because they don't like me or have no affection for me, we are otherwise a family.

As is the case with most families, we complain. Our African American brothers complain about Pakistani brothers who speak in their own languages in the mosque and not English. Now that immigration has driven the number of Pakistani members to be much higher, isolation of English speakers is more visible. It is a cultural phenomenon.

After speaking the whole week in English at a job, you see your friends in the mosque and you want to converse and crack jokes in

your native tongue. In Pakistan the Punjabi jokes are absolutely hilarious, but translating them into English is a sure way to kill the punch line, not to mention the fact it'll confuse the heck out of your audience.

Islam is a multi-cultural religion. It has adopted and adjusted to many cultures in the world. A wedding ceremony of a Muslim family in the Middle East is altogether different than one in Pakistan, Indonesia or Nigeria. Islam will also accommodate the American culture as it has done with others. It will take time. Our next generation will see some changes but I speculate that the generation after them will see Islam adapting to the American culture in a dramatic way. African Americans will be comfortable as will Pakistanis.

In the physical world we see some substances that naturally do not interact with others. There are other substances called emulsifiers which enable the others to mix. Islam is the emulsifier for humanity. It allows interaction while preserving identity.

People who join Islam should not expect to change a whole culture. They should make an effort to interact and appreciate the members they share the mosque with. They need to live up to the religion they have accepted because there is much to learn. They would not be able to reach the spiritual heights if they get hung up on issues like someone else not saying *salaam* to them or talking to them in English. Initiate the hug instead of waiting for someone else to do so. Take it from me, you might be saving yourself from a lifetime of regret.

There is a lot to learn yet. The prayers in Arabic, understanding of the Holy Qur'an, wisdom from the *ah-hadith* of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW}, the proper relationship with the *Khalifa* of the time and the Islamic upbringing of the children. Pakistanis are the ones who brought the treasure of Islam to African Americans. Now it is up to them to take it to the next level and possibly bring it to the Caucasians or Latino Americans. It is a way of life to be adopted and not just some Sufi rants and slogans.

I imagine some of my African American brothers who are close are going to try to invite me out after reading this perspective. If that's what you're thinking...forget it! It's already too late. But seriously, that isn't the point...besides, my wife wouldn't eat hot dogs or drink coffee. Basically put, we all have cultural differences in our homes. We simply won't allow them to deter us from the lofty aspirations of Islam. It is for this reason that we are a family.

It sounds redundant but brothers and sisters are expected to be family. ♦

Falahud Din Shams



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